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TOT: 210334Z JUL 87

DIRECTOR 564056

[REDACTED]

SUBJECT: MIDDLE EAST BRIEF C [REDACTED] FOR 21 JULY 1987.

FROM: DDI/O [REDACTED]

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1. PERSIAN GULF: IRAN READY TO BEGIN NAVAL MANEUVERS

[REDACTED]

1. PERSIAN GULF: IRAN READY TO BEGIN NAVAL MANEUVERS

IRANIAN NAVAL MANEUVERS IN THE PERSIAN GULF, THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ, AND THE GULF OF OMAN--SCHEDULED TO BEGIN THIS WEEK--WILL INCREASE THE POSSIBILITY OF A CONFRONTATION BETWEEN US AND IRANIAN FORCES.

[REDACTED]

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CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY SPEAKER RAFSANJANI WARNED LAST FRIDAY THAT, IF THE US "GOT CRAZY," IRAN WAS READY TO SINK US SHIPS AND KILL THOUSANDS OF US TROOPS IN THE PERSIAN GULF, ACCORDING TO IRANIAN PRESS REPORTS. THE JOINT STAFF OF IRAN'S REVOLUTIONARY GUARD ANNOUNCED SUNDAY THAT GUARD NAVAL UNITS WOULD BEGIN CONDUCTING "MARTYRDOM" MANEUVERS THIS WEEK TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR COMBAT READINESS.

THE START OF NAVAL "MARTYRDOM" MANEUVERS JUST AS THE US BEGINS TO ESCORT REFLAGGED KUWAITI TANKERS IS ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT COINCIDENTAL AND SUGGESTS TEHRAN WILL MAINTAIN ITS BELLICOSE STANCE IN THE PERSIAN GULF. ALTHOUGH THE REVOLUTIONARY GUARD NAVY HAS FEWER CAPABILITIES THAN THE REGULAR NAVY, IT IS MORE LIKELY TO TAKE GREATER RISKS AND ENGAGE IN MORE PROVOCATIVE ACTS.

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